



Code of Conduct

1. Statement of Context and Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to outline the standards of conduct that are expected of all AGSV staff.

An objective of this Code of Conduct is to promote child safety.

The principal responsibility of AGSV staff is to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner. AGSV staff must ensure that the workplace is safe and free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence.

This Code of Conduct is intended to provide a guidance framework only and is not an exhaustive list of the required standards. This Code of Conduct supports and should be read in conjunction with applicable legal instruments.

2. Application

This Code applies to all AGSV employees, volunteers and contractors (collectively referred to as **staff** throughout this code of conduct).

3. Reference Points / Background Papers

- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic);
- *Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014* (Vic);
- *Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014* (Vic);
- *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic);
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic);
- [DHS Child Safe Standards Toolkit: Resource 3 Code of Conduct](#);
- An Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards;
- Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Procedure;
- Mandatory Reporting Policy;
- Privacy Policy;
- Social Media and Social Networking Policy; and
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

4. Definitions

Legal instrument means either legislation, an award, a collective enterprise agreement or contract of employment.

Child Safe Officer means the staff member of AGSV appointed to fulfil this role as part of their duties.

Child means a person who is under the age of 18 years who attends an AGSV event.

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

5. Policies, Procedure and Laws

AGSV personnel are required to observe and comply with all of AGSV's policies and procedures and applicable legislative instruments at all times during the course of their employment or engagement (whichever the case may be) with AGSV.

6. Professional and Personal Conduct and Child Safety

The personal and professional behaviour of AGSV staff should conform with the standards that could reasonably be expected of persons who hold similar positions.

AGSV staff are required to undertake their duties in a professional, responsible and ethical manner and to act in the best interests of AGSV. They are expected to act professionally and honestly when performing their duties.

As part of the screening process, the following key event personnel must have and, if requested, provide appropriate evidence of a valid WWCC (or other state equivalent) to show that they are suitable to work with children and young people in a school setting:

- All AGSV staff and Board members
- those paid by AGSV for their services (excluding bump in and bump out);
- volunteers;
- relevant contractors who may have unsupervised access to children; and
- anyone else who AGSV staff feel requires a WWCC due to the nature of the work that they are undertaking for AGSV

Any costs associated with gaining a valid WWCC will be the responsibility of the individual.

Working with Children (including with respect to Child Safety)

AGSV staff must ensure that they act within professional boundaries and according to legal requirements.

This Code of Conduct provides a set of principles and standards about how AGSV staff should behave with children. All AGSV staff are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children and are expected to behave in accordance with this Code of Conduct. In particular, all AGSV staff (and in particular, those engaged in child-connected work) must act lawfully at all times and:

- adhere to AGSV's Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Procedure at all times and uphold the overarching values and principles set out therein;
- take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse (including online abuse);
- treat everyone with respect;
- listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another;
- ensure all interactions with children involving IT and social media are appropriate, and reflect AGSV's commitment to child safety;
- ensure as far as practicable that children are appropriately supervised when interacting with adults or other children through online forums without compromising the child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections or learning opportunities;
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning their self-identification and by recognising the importance of such student's relationships with their extended family and community, including Elders);
- promote cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by exhibiting zero tolerance of discrimination and by recognising the tendency of people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds/communities to mistrust authority figures);
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, in terms of level of supervision and care provided for such children);
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary or intersex (for example, by never questioning their self-identification and encouraging them to express themselves);

- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children who are unable to live at home (e.g. children in and out of home care or custodial settings) (for example, by actively communicating and collaborating with the child's caseworker, carer or support agency and by implementing strategies to support school engagement and achievement).
- ensure as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child, including through online / telephone forums. If this is not possible, AGSV staff must ensure any one-on-one contact is clearly documented;
- encourage and recognise the importance of friendships and support from peers to help children feel safe and be less isolated;
- report any child safety concerns and/or any allegations of child abuse to AGSV's Child Safe Officer in accordance with the Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Procedure and in relation to the latter, ensure such allegations are reported to the police or child protection authority;
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child is safe;
- observe these standards and acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this Code of Conduct to AGSV's Child Safe Officer;
- welcome parents and carers to participate in decisions about their child's safety;
- attend and participate in all compulsory training;
- take all reasonable steps to eliminate racism and to ensure that any instances of racism are identified, confronted and addressed with appropriate consequences;
- take all reasonable steps to actively support and facilitate the inclusion of, and participation by, Aboriginal children;
- facilitate child-friendly ways for children to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns;
- AGSV staff should also be aware of and observe recent amendments to the Crimes Act, which provide that:
 - it is a criminal offence to communicate (including electronically) by words or conduct with a child with the intention of facilitating the child's engagement or involvement in a sexual offence with them or another adult (**Grooming Offence**); and
 - it is a criminal offence for a person who, by reason of the position they occupy, has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a child will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by a person and knows that there is a substantial risk that that person will

commit a sexual offence against the child, negligently fails to reduce or remove the risk (**Failure to Protect Offence**). A person negligently fails to reduce or remove a risk if that failure involves a falling short of the standard of care that a reasonable person would exercise in the circumstances.

AGSV staff should also be aware of their mandatory reporting obligations and their obligations in respect of the **Failure to Disclose Offence** under the Crimes Act.

AGSV staff must not engage in unlawful conduct or:

- develop any 'special' relationships with students/children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children);
- exhibit behaviours with students/children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical;
- interact with students/children through their personal telephones or social media accounts in an inappropriate manner;
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors);
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes;
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities);
- use inappropriate language or gestures in the presence of children;
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children;
- discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability;
- have contact (including online or telephone contact) with a child or his/her family outside of AGSV dealings without consent from the family (for example, no babysitting). Note that incidental or accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is not inappropriate;
- work with any young person while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs/substance;
- breach the content outlined in the Position Statement referring to Taking/Using images of children;
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

Working with other AGSV staff

AGSV staff must ensure that they treat each other with respect and courtesy. They must demonstrate their respect by holding other AGSV staff in high regard and work cooperatively with others in the best interests of AGSV.

7. Public Statements

AGSV staff making written or oral comments on any matter relating to AGSV and which might reasonably be expected to become public, must ensure that they hold proper authority and authorisation to do so. AGSV staff must not make public comments that would damage the reputation of AGSV.

AGSV staff are not permitted to communicate directly with the media on behalf of AGSV unless they have been directed to do so by AGSV. If AGSV staff are contacted by media representatives, they are not permitted to provide any comments other than to direct the media representative to the Executive Officer.

8. Attendance

AGSV staff are expected to attend for work as required and on time.

9. Dress

AGSV staff must ensure that their appearance is neat, clean and appropriate for their particular area of work.

10. Smoking

AGSV does not promote or encourage smoking. AGSV staff are not permitted to smoke on AGSV premises or in the immediate vicinity of entrances to AGSV premises. AGSV staff are not permitted to smoke in the presence of children or parents.

11. Confidential Information

AGSV staff must respect the confidentiality of information received as AGSV personnel. Confidential information received by AGSV staff during their engagement remains the property of AGSV and must not be disclosed.

12. Consequences for Breach of this Policy

AGSV emphasises the need to fully comply with the requirements of this policy. Breaches of this policy will be treated seriously and dealt with appropriately.

13. Implications for Practice

13.1 At Board Level

To properly implement this policy, AGSV must ensure:

- that this policy is endorsed on an annual basis;
- that copies of this policy are made available to all AGSV staff;
- that this policy is incorporated into the AGSV's record of current policies;
- that this policy is incorporated into AGSV's induction program and any ongoing training, to ensure that all AGSV staff are aware of the policy, have read and understood the policy, and acknowledge their commitment to comply with the policy; and
- that periodic training and refresher sessions are administered to AGSV staff in relation to this policy.

13.2 At Other Levels

To properly implement this policy, all AGSV staff must ensure that they abide by this policy and assist AGSV in the implementation of this policy.